DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 123 177 SO 009 126

AUTHOR Lynch, Patrick D.
TITLE Culture and Control of Education.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, California, April 19-23, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS American Indian Culture; *Boards of Education; *Community Influence; Cultural Background; *Culture; Educational History; Educational Needs; Experimental Schools; Federal State Relationship; *Professional Associations; Professional Training; Response Mode; Role Conflict; *School Community Relationship; School Systems; Social Science Research; State School District Relationship

ABSTRACT

This paper describes how education as a function of society is controlled mainly by professional education associations and influenced to a small degree by local cultural groups. An alternative for control of Indian education is explored with respect to the potential of school boards for flow of power and relationship to Indian cultures. Community culture has influenced schools indirectly by influencing teachers' primary relationships, but community influence on a school's technical system disappeared with the advent of national systems of education. National education systems resulted from professional training of educators and the formation of professional associations, backed by state power over certification and curricula. Professional norms were so powerful that they replaced cultural affiliations. School board roles were weakened by the professionalization and state power that was used to conform board members to professional rules. In a few experimental districts like Rocky Boy, Montana, native-American boards of education and professionals worked to create new board member roles which did not follow the existing patterns set by professional associations. If experimental schools are to be created according to the perceived needs of communities, then school board members and professionals will have to work together to create new board member roles that are more responsive to the culture of a community. (Author/ND)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED123177

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

CULTURE AND CONTROL OF EDUCATION

by

Patrick D. Lynch
The Pennsylvania State University

SP 009126

Abstract

Control of education is a function of society which is influenced to a small degree by local cultures. Culture of community has had an influence over the school by means of influence over teachers' primary relationships, but community influence over the technical system of the school disappeared with the arrival of national systems of education. National systems of education were the result of professional training of educators and the formation of associations of professionals backed by the power of the state over certification and elements of the curriculum. Professional norms are so powerful that they replace cultural affiliations of minority people who are socialized in training programs. School board roles were weakened by the professionalization and state power exercised to create conformity with professional rules for board members. In a few experimental districts like Rocky Boy, Montana, Native American boards and professionals worked to create new board member roles which did not follow the patterns by professional associations. Board members and professionals working together will have to work to create new board member roles which are more proactive if experimental schools are to be created according to the perceived needs of communities.

The relationship of Culture and Control of Education is a theme of increasing importance throughout the world. In most developed and underdeveloped countries cultures interact with increasing asperity.

There is a "minority problem" in most countries. And in most countries the assimilation of the minority or minorities, once considered progressing or almost complete, is now viewed with increasing concern as the nation's minority demands or negotiates for more access to power. How the negotiation process affects schooling or the agenda of the schools is the subject of this commentary. The research of Irvin Jones on the cultural affiliation of Navajo school board members, the work of S. Gabe Paxton on the perceptions of professionals and clients of a Bureau of Indian Affairs School, and the paper by Gerald Gipp on cultural values affecting local planning of the education of Indian children provide data on an underlying dimension of schooling in any multicultural society. And all societies are to some degree multicultural. Schooling is increasingly questioned as it determines the lives of children for their adult years. Minorities in the society are the subjects (or objects) of a process designed to shape them toward ends which their parents have not helped to select or shape. Society has imposed in every country an agenda for the school which is a national agenda.

Every country has what Tyack says is the "one best system."[1] Countries allow and even foster so called protest or minority school systems. But if one compares the curriculum and goals of the non-official schools in any country with the official schools, one observes few differences. The non-official schools may have an extra language or cultural indoctrination component, but they do not neglect the official curricula. Indeed, the

non-official schools are often more intense in imparting skills or an indoctrination toward national values which is even more blatant, or unalloyed, than the official schools. In a sense they strive to prove their loyalty, or their innocence toward acculturation, than the official or public schools. Schooling, then, really is national; one does not escape the program of nationalization even though the school is not official.

Schools are centers for skill and acculturation. They serve national ends. Social systems take children away from families and neighborhoods and cultures for their own purposes. Schools have gradually become aggregated into national systems which serve national ends. Willard Waller in the early 1930's described the influence of the community on schools and its professionals and students. The process he described accounts for a part of the school's agenda. He did not dwell upon the national or state influences or relate community influence to culture and norms in conflict with society. He saw the community as attempting to control the moral teaching of the school. Even at the time he observed the process of schooling, socialization processes were and had been powerful. Norms for those who felt at home in the one best system were unquestioned and unnoticed because they were right. The schools had Americanized the immigrant and were hard at work on the Native American children.

National educational systems have become more centralized with improvements in transportation and instant communication. Centralization is evident everywhere, as national ministries of education or state departments of education have become more powerful in setting goals and influencing curricula. Schools have become more alike and local differences have

lessened with increasing economic development, and discussions about education have been focused on state or national concerns. Local movement toward compliance with court decisions or ministry requirements has been speeded up by the exercise of power by centralized educational authority. Where uncertain transportation and lack of national communication systems allowed the local units to make haste slowly, to shape educators to local norms, and to filter messages through local governmental processes, national education statutes were applied with great variability. Delegation of authority to local units allowed communities to influence their educational setting, but the delegation of authority did not result in significant local influence on curricula. Waller pictured the value system of the community as being a powerful influence on students via expectations communicated to teachers.[2] The community held the teacher responsible as a moral representative of the community. The community powerfully influences the teachers by means of primary relationships established in the community. In some respects, the community always tries to make "locals" out of the school professionals so that they accept and propagate local value systems. The community, however, did not influence the technical system. Except where the technical judgements clash with the community's value system, as in the case of the West Virginia communities' battles over textbooks and library books, the technical system was and is untouched. Even when the technical system is clearly deficient as proven by low reading achievement of children in upper grades, the community has had little effect of it. The clashes over textbooks, sex and drug education, or showers are over issues marginal to the technical system. The technical system was built by professionals

and has flourished and been protected by the authority of the state.

Nowhere was the technical system more powerful than in schools for Indian children. Professional autonomy was supreme and unchallenged. The fact that the technical system is free from interference is witness to the power of the socialization of professionals who organized schools the same way everywhere within a nation. It is also witness to the power of the socialization process done on communities. The professionals are not interfered with. They work their way in the schools with few exceptions, as noted above, and those clashes are over concerns marginal to the professional. In Indian communities the school was free to orient children by means of a curriculum which was largely at variance with local norms. Recreation patterns, worship and ceremonial patterns, and family interaction patterns were all interfered with by schools for Indian children with few protests from Indian parents. The few protestors were ignored or punished. The sanctions against protesting parents were powerful; and the parents' resources for retaliation against the school were meager, weak, and diffuse. Parents could not insist on children staying out of school for ceremonies or ritual or helping out in family crises. The school acted to break the child from the culture and to snap the affective bonds of the child from his primary system.

Schools always tear the child away from the primary system, the culture, and the community in order that the society or nation can demonstrate to all that the society's purposes supercede the local values and concerns. The state has established a secular institution, the school, with boundaries marking it off from community values and culture.

The professional system, inducting and orienting young people as teachers into the system, imposes powerful norms. This process of professionalization is so powerful that even the brightest children of minority cultures become professionals who in turn administer the technical system in accord with the national professional norms. The "one best system" is hardy indeed. It flourishes no matter what kind of soil it is transplanted in.

The national system became national only partly because of the political power of the state and its enactment of certification, attendance laws, and laws furnishing free textbooks. Even more powerful were the construction and growth of professional norms. These were put in place by two forces. The growth of professional associations paralleled and made possible a national system in the U.S. The National Education Association and the Department of Superintendence of the NEA, later the American Association of School Administrators, provided the platform for erection of national professional norms.

The university presidents and professors who organized the colleges of education and departments of educational administration in the period 1890-1920 had a national audience in these two organizations. The students who went through the administrator training process gathered as administrators annually to be reassured that the American public school system was indeed the best for building an American culture. Textbook publishers and later test production firms helped finance the annual meetings as well as provide the materials and evaluation devices for a national curriculum.

The second element in the construction of national norms was the professional school of education. The schools of education, especially

their departments of educational administration, were the seminaries for the preparation of those who would go forth to preach the virtues of American society and teach the skills necessary to join the elect of the society.

In the Massachusetts Bay colony it was deemed necessary to read the bible in order to fend off the devil who lurks for the ignorant and lazy. In the new Jerusalem those who would be saved must learn to read and write and figure in order to recite the American creed. Outside the one best system there was no salvation. Only the elect could enter the heaven on earth of the middle class anglo society.

Professionalization carries with it the elements of a science of the craft based on knowledge. Practice of the skill and acquaintance with the vocabulary of the profession enables the practitioner to communicate with the rest of the profession. A sharing of belief in the efficacy of the science is as necessary as the knowledge. This body of belief in the efficacy of the craft is as important as the knowledge and skills which are taught to the novice teachers and administrators. The professionals organized into associations and the colleges of education influenced the state departments of education to write into law and regulations the certification apparatus necessary for guarding entry and operationalizing the belief in efficacy of professional methods and skills.

The public school system was built into a national system according to the consensus of professionals. The professional associations and the colleges of education came together on the norms. The state authority protected the norms; the colleges taught the knowledge base; and the professionals, organized into associations, provided the communication

mechanisms necessary for promoting the doctrine of efficacy of the craft. The public was thereby convinced that the schools were the best possible institutions for the preparation of American youth for the good life. The assurances that the schools were efficacious for "all American youth" carried rhetoric about "local control." Local control by school boards was a belief, even though control was surrendered by boards to professionals, and the surrender was facilitated by state departments of education. As the myth of local control was evoked prayerfully, it had actually disappeared before World War II. Boards were "trained" by professionals in their proper roles. Training sessions for board members insured that board members would be indoctrinated to stick to policy and leave operation of schools to the professionals. Both "policy" and "operation" (or administration) were defined by professionals. Board members followed roles prescribed for them by professionals. Boards were composed of laymen who followed the scripts arranged for them by superintendents. Few board members, and they were considered "bad," departed from prepared agenda or introduced agenda items of their own.

Community influence over schools affected moral norms for teachers but touched the curriculum only lightly. The community determined who the professionals would be but could not determine what they would do with the school. Professionals in a sense are interchangeable as exercisers of skill or craft. The community would choose one over another because of their primary affiliations, sex, religion, looks, or ethnic orgin. As much as the community monitored the moral behavior of the teachers, the memberships, and their social affiliations, it did not interfere with the nationalization of the school by professionals.

Communities' influence on schools consisted not in what the school offered, but where it was and who it served. Communities sorted themselves out according to socioeconomic levels. Schools' boundaries were determined by these socioeconomic sortings. Schools with more resources served higher socioeconomic neighborhoods, and states did not interfere with these local arrangements until courts intervened in the 1960's. In exchange for its underwriting professional freedom to organize the school's curriculum and socialization process, according to a national model, the state allowed maximum freedom to communities to regulate inputs of resources.

The national parameters of schooling were supplied by professionals and state departments of education. Communities established boundaries and school attendance areas. In the 1960's federal guidelines and court divisions began to affect the shape of school boundaries. However, in the recent decisions the U.S. Supreme Court has refused to order states to restructure local tax resources or to order cross district bussing, hence, restricting the federal power to force states to rearrange unequal community resources.

Professionals still hold the power to run schools. Achievement in school is affected by socioeconomic status, so schooling works to the advantage of those who have superior resources in their homes. Professionals apparently only know how to organize and run a system which is so attuned to the society's structure that it reinforces the inequalities which that society holds dearly. Designing a system which is at variance with the society's norms would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, simply because professionals are trapped. They are products of a society

and can see but dimly beyond the psychological boundaries of their society. Professionals are not seers. They administer a system as they have been trained and in the way they perceive society desiring the system to be run. If the society holds values such as upward mobility, competition between individuals, exhibition of some kind of physical skills, deference to authority, loyalty to certain principles deemed "basic," infusion of a philosophy of consuption and waste, dedication to technology, reverence for money and material goods, acceptance of social inequality and ascription of inferiority to certain classes and groups, then the schools will train students in these values, wittingly or unwittingly. These values are values held by societies and which professionals will with difficulty eliminate from the curriculum or even be able to identify. If recognized, they would be defended as right and necessary for individual survival. Children are trained in survival skills for getting jobs and participating as citizens. Hence, survival justifies the school system and enables the school to play a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Schools for Indian children can be a kind of non-official system, a protest school if they mirror values other than those of the official system. If Indian communities influence their schools to build a curriculum special for Indian children, these schools would be different from the official schools. If a school is designed for a community with a different curriculum, the problem of survival skills or entry skills into the society must be met. If the university wants a school for the preservation of its own cultural values with less emphasis on so-called survival or basis skills, then the fate of the children must be weighed. The basic questions of what the people desire for their schools was considered by Professor

Gipp. Each choice requires marginal utility considerations. The tribe or community chooses some utility and sacrifices another. The choice of utility affects not only the children in the schools but the entire tribe. The society is indifferent in some ways to the choice made by the single tribe or community. However, the society is not indifferent to the collectivity of its cultures' choices for utility. The society can allow some freedom to some communities or tribes but probably will not allow its component cultures a free choice of utility.

The Indian professional is in a marginal position in carrying out the Indian communities' desires. The process of professionalization to some degree breaks a member of a culture away from the view and values of that culture. The universalistic orientation of professionals toward clients moves a professional from a cultural "insider" to more of an "outsider" or observer. The professional can become a participant-observer, but he no longer is just a participant in his own culture. He compares his community's behavior with social expectations. Professionalization imposes scientific and universalistic values on an individual. The question of loyalty to the system or to the community is a real one for the Indian professional. The choices which the professional makes among decisions regarding curriculum, organizational constraints, and the degree of accomodation of the system to cultures and their individuals require that the professional assess societal versus community requirements. They require the professional to consider the costs to the community or tribe of the choices among utility. Goals expressed by the community for the school carry costs for the community and children whatever these goals may be. The goal of emphasis on job entry skills may carry with it desociali-

zation in the Indian community and the implication that schooling is for getting out. The goal of concentrating on culture may deemphasize skills and act to trap those who wish to leave by not providing them with a sufficiently high level of skills.

The Indian communities cannot be seen as one collectivity at some point on a continuum of values but are a variety of cultures expressing a great array of values. The variety of choices of value among Indian communities are as great as those expressed by non-Indian communities, so professionals in Indian communities are apt to be forced to weigh value choices which divide rather than unite communities particularly if the school serves many Indian communities. Dr. Paxton has explored the perceptions held by professionals and clients of a school of decision making power in the school. These conflicting perceptions reveal the powerlessness felt by the parents and students in affecting decision making. The Indian professionals in such a situation have the option of helping clients to apply pressure at points where a response will be elicited, or to capitalize on the clients' lack of knowledge and running the system with all the autonomy their predecessors enjoyed.

The choice of a professional to open up the system to more influence from the community brings with it risks to the professional. The professional's position becomes less secure and his role becomes one increasingly of negotiating among various value systems held by Indian communities from one which the students come. The professional opting for the maximum degrees of freedom to exercise his or her professional knowledge may have to decide to keep client involvement to a minimum or at least not to increase the knowledge and bargaining power of the various client groups.

If the Indian professional chooses to keep his position secure from contention, he will be opting for preservation of the options to himself with little involvement from the community. The course of action has its risks, too, if the Indian community expects that the arrival of Indian professionals should bring with it more participation from Indian people and the exploration of more goal options for the school. The Indian professional who tries to maintain a closed system in such a climate will probably be subject to severe school-community stress with increasingly serious divisions appearing within the various Indian communities as they divide along tribal or ideological lines.

Indian boards of education, whether they be advisory or governing boards, express their value systems and those of communities they represent. Mr. Irvin Jones' research shows that Indian board members of public schools resemble professionals in their expectations of schools, their conduct of affairs, and their own life styles. Occupying culturally marginal positions, they are in the position of having to mediate between communities they represent which are traditional and culturally different from the culture of the schools. At the same time, they have to justify the school to the community. The fact that Indian board members with real power tend to resemble the board members while advisory board members behave differently from them causes one to wonder how the school can really be influenced by the community which has really different expectations for that school. The school is accepted as a school in the "one best system" model. There has been such a long history of the school as an instrument of acculturation that board members of whatever kind of value orientation appear to accept the school as a place for children to be brought along

in anglo values. Navajo board members expressed a desire for various kinds of Navajo cultural affiliation in their schools, but to what extent is that cultural program an essential feature or merely an adjunct or a curiosity? Integration of a culture into the life of the school requires the remaking of a school from its philosophy outward. Only Indian professionals can combine the technical knowledge with the cultural knowledge necessary to transform the school. The professionals, however, are now expert at programming rather than in the cultural infusion itself. The experts on the culture are Indian people who live the culture. The board members who are sympathic to this transformation, indeed desperately want it, have to be in a powerful decision making position to work much more closely with professionals than is true in American schools. The role of board members in American schools has not been of this kind. Tyack's work[3] and Ravitch's work on the New York schools[4] shows how professionals destroyed boards who represented ethnic interests in the early 1900's. Gross, in his seminal work on school boards published in 1958, classified those board members who self-consciously represented ethnic membership and values and who "interfered" with superintendents as bad board members.[5]

The making of the Ramah and Rocky Boy schools not only was a milestone in the creation of different kinds of schools with an integration of subject matter and cultural program peculiar to Indian communities but was significant because the molds of board member and administrator roles were thrown away. Both roles appeared to be similar. In watching and listening to board members and administrators, it was difficult to distinguish board members from professionals. The roles were diffuse and overlapping as both types of people worked on curriculum, staffing, resources, and

control structure. Board members and administrators taught each other about what had to be in the school. These schools emerged as community schools because they really did mirror those communities with programs that those communities wanted.

The models of Indian controlled schools which are quite different in type from the "one best system" provide lessons not only in content but in role and organizational structure. These models appear to be closer to the schools of the nineteenth century in the kinds of roles board members played. They did not follow the script of the board members' training manuals or workshops.

To what extent the Indian alternative schools provide models for widespread use is a question which can only be answered ultimately by governing bodies, courts, and professionals as well as Indian people and communities which hold cultural values different than and more important than national or societal norms. The question must be asked: To what degree can local values survive increased pressure applied by society to conform to state and national purposes and to avoid divisiveness? How can local boards resist powerful influences from the supra system (or the society) represented by the state and professionals to satisfy national pressures for socialization toward integration into new mechanisms for integration and acculturation? The local boards bent on preserving local values will have to be ever more inventive in influencing professionals and shaping legal means to protect their cultural interests. Professionals will have to help them, not only to avoid stereotyped roles in appropriate communities which want to build a particular kind of school, but to enact new kinds of board member roles, active and constructive, and to set expectations for new kinds of administrator roles.

References

1. David Tyack, The One Best System. Cambridge, The Harvard University Press, 1974.

2. Willard Waller, The Sociology of Teaching. New York, Science Editions, John Wiley and Sons, 1965.

3. Tyack, op. cit.

4. Diane Ravitch, The Great School Wars, New York City 1805-1973. New York, Basic Books, 1974.

5. Neal Gross, Ward Mason, Alexander McEachen, Explorations in Role Analysis, Studies of the School Superintendency Role. New York, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1958.